



*The State Office of Rural Health*

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**Colorado Rural Health Center Releases 2021 Snapshot of Rural Health**

**Colorado Rural Health Center Snapshot of Rural Health Explores Demographics,  
Population Health, Education, Economy, COVID-19, and more.**

**Denver, CO – March 19, 2021**– The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) has released the 2021 edition of its *Snapshot of Rural Health* as well as the regional editions of the Snapshot of Rural Health. The annual publication highlights rural health data such as demographic trends, population health, education levels, opioid use, and the economy through the use of infographic data visualization, text, and maps. This year’s edition features the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth, and expanded coverage on the rural economy amidst the pandemic.

Colorado Rural Health Center CEO Michelle Mills is excited about the updated and expanded snapshot. “The Snapshot of Rural Health forms a strong foundation for the Colorado Rural Health Center’s advocacy efforts on the state and federal levels each year,” explains Mills. “The snapshot provides an easy to digest yet thorough picture of how rural healthcare operates in the state. The onset of the pandemic has had profound impacts on our rural facilities and I think the report does a good job of fleshing that out.”

The *Snapshot of Rural Health* also includes data collected and analyzed by CRHC’s internal Health Information Technology (HIT) Data Analyst and Policy and Advocacy Manager. A comprehensive citations page makes sourcing each fact from the 48 page report easy and convenient.

Along with the release of the full annual Snapshot Report, CRHC also released five regional Snapshots that detail the progress of different regions of the state, allowing for apples-to-apples comparisons. Regions covered in the separate reports include the Northwest, Southwest, Mountain West, San Luis Valley, and Eastern Plains.

Michelle Mills, alongside other CRHC staff, attended virtual meetings with legislators as part of the National Rural Health Association's [Rural Health Policy Institute](#) on February 9-11. The annual policy institute event gives Colorado-based staff an opportunity to meet with policymakers and stakeholders to discuss legislative priorities. The *Snapshot of Rural Health* is a vital component of these discussions.

Examples of featured data include:

- When one Colorado hospital was forced to shut down its labor and delivery department, the next closest hospital was 45 miles away, over mountain passes. Of Colorado's 32 Critical Access Hospitals, just 18 now have obstetrics departments.
- The past decade has resulted in 29 climate disasters costing over \$136 billion in damages to Colorado and neighboring regions. It is expected that climate disasters are likely to increase as the climate crisis worsens.
- In Colorado, the fentanyl-related death rate is more than four times higher than in 2016. Deaths involving methamphetamines are six times greater when compared to 2012.
- There are ICU beds in only 27 of Colorado's 64 counties.
- From late March through the beginning of May 2020, a total of 419,547 people in Colorado filed for unemployment, an overwhelming number that is a record high when compared to any other single year in the state.
- In 2020, Colorado observed Chief Executive Officer staff turnover in 11 of 32 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs). This equates to 34%.
- Acute traumatic stress resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic paired with burnout may intensify an already high pressure environment of assisting sick or distressed patients daily, increasing the risk of mental health trauma among health care professionals.

As Colorado's State Office of Rural Health and member-based association for rural health facilities, CRHC is a clearinghouse for rural health information and resources, helping providers throughout Colorado enhance healthcare services available in rural communities, and helping elected officials make informed decisions about healthcare policy.

The Snapshot of Rural Health is available for download at <https://coruralhealth.org/snapshot-of-rural-health> - For additional resources, visit the CRHC resource center at <http://coruralhealth.org/resources>.

### **About The Colorado Rural Health Center**

The Colorado Rural Health Center was established in 1991 as Colorado's State Office of Rural Health. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, CRHC serves dual roles as the State Office of Rural Health and the State Rural Health Association. The organization's mission is to enhance healthcare services in the state by providing information, education, linkages, tools, and energy toward addressing rural health issues. CRHC's vision is to improve healthcare services available in rural communities to ensure that all rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable, high quality healthcare. For more information visit [www.coruralhealth.org](http://www.coruralhealth.org), call 303-832-7493, or call toll free 800-851-6782 from rural Colorado.